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Motivational Potential of Self-Guided Tasks in BE Learning

Nowadays Business English learning acquires more significance due to radical changes in various spheres of social interaction being the result of world integration processes. Since any learning achievements are being predetermined by learners' motivation, so it is not accidental that the problem of activating the motivation mechanisms in human activities is in the focus of attention. It uppermost concerns the sphere of education where the results of learning may become apparent in the extended period.

However, the situation at non-linguistic Universities experiences the lack of in-class hours being allocated for learning the target language, this process does not result in providing the required learners' proficiency level. That is because the training technologies, being currently used at the Universities, need introducing and providing substantial students' self-guided tasks activation in the course of language learning.

Most educators acknowledge that at positive intrinsic motivation availability the efficiency of learning process dramatically increases as the intrinsic mechanism of activity, notably: needs → interests → values → motives → goals – is being actuated¹. To stimulate motivation to learning scholars recommend to start with

¹ Осипов А.И. Пространство и время как категории мировоззрения и регуляторы практической деятельности / А.И. Осипов; науч.ред. Д.И.Широков. – Мн: Наука и техника, 1989. – 220 с.

selecting the topics and activities that learners would really enjoy doing².

The purpose of the article is to consider the ways enabling the learners by means of realizing self-guided tasks to activate their motivational potential in the course of BE learning.

It should be remarked that when teaching Business English along with using general methodological principles the one, being specific to BE learning as it provides a motivational adequacy³, should be taken into consideration. This principle presupposes that in the course of learning the level of learners' motivational adequacy, enabling to provide reaching by students their learning goals, should be formed.

As mentioned above, so far as independent language users training at non-linguistic Universities under current conditions does not result in providing the required proficiency level, so the learning process necessitates providing:

- 1) learning environment, where students should be as autonomous as possible (or even independent) in the process of acquiring the target language and the communication skills in that language⁴;
- 2) tutorials, facilitating the students to realize their personal potential by involving them in role-plays, imaginative continuous simulations, projecting, presenting information having been searched by them by means of giving them and developing gradually their learning autonomy in the course of BE learning;
- 3) teaching aids and materials, serving as the source for selecting meaningful sociolinguistic and pragmatic information.

The above process should be based on the following assumptions as:

- 1) totally communicative nature of all learning activities being suggested for practice;
- 2) content-based learning underlying all the materials and learning activities being given in learning materials;

² Brophy J. Motivating students to learn/J.Brophy. –The McFraw-Hill Companies: Michigan State University, 1998, - 277 p.

³ Тарнопольский О.Б. Методика обучения английскому языку для делового общения: учебное пособие/ О.Б. Тарнопольский, С.П. Кожушко. – К.: Ленвит, 2004.

⁴ Dam L. Plenary: Developing learner autonomy – preparing learners for lifelong learning / L. Dam // IATEFL 2002: York Conference Selections / Ed. by A. Pulverness. – Whitstable, Kent: IATEFL, 2002.

3) Internet-assisted learning with mandatory students Internet-search of up-to-date information concerning the topics being studied⁵.

Taking into account the fact that teaching at the Universities (mostly being of group character) doesn't encourage introducing technologies taking into consideration language users' needs, it is obvious that learning process still needs to be optimized to correspond specific requirements intrinsic to those of certain tertiary schools.

The alternative for solving the above mentioned problem may be in rearranging the learning process by implementing in it the elements of the constructivist blended learning approach originated from practical experience in e-learning combining traditional classroom and web-based training and being designed for practical training. The above learning is being considered as "the approach providing students with opportunities of "constructing" their own knowledge and skills through practical experience in real-life or modeled activities"⁶. Blended learning has been defined as "a synergic learning structure, dynamically and organically combining into an invisible unity traditional classroom learning with online learning for creating a more flexible learning environment with the purpose of intensifying and facilitating the practical training process"⁷.

But for introducing in learning process the suggested approach at University it should be based on:

- 1) the principle of integrating English speaking, listening, reading and writing in the learning process;
- 2) the principle of learning materials authenticity;

⁵ Tarnopolsky O. Professional communication-oriented content-based internet-assisted coursebook of English for Ukrainian students majoring in psychology: concept and principles / O. Tarnopolsky, S.Kozhushko // Навчання загальнонавчальної та ділової англійської мови у східній Європі: для чого та як?: III Міжнар. наук. конференція, Дніпропетровськ, Україна, 15-16 травня 2009 р. – Д.: Вид-во ДУЕП, 2009.

⁶ Williams M., Burden R.L. Psychology for Language Teachers: A social constructivist Approach. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁷ Tarnopolsky O. Constructivist Blended Learning Approach to Teaching English for Specific Purposes. – London: Versita, 2012.

- 3) the principle of authenticity of students' learning activities and learning communication;
- 4) the principle of developing students' informative competence in English.

Let us consider why the applying the above mentioned principles is important for activating learners' motivational potential. The matter is that the integration of speaking, listening, reading and writing is incident to any business activity as in the course of negotiations (listening and speaking) the participants have to read documents (reading), make up notes and agreement drafts (writing), study numerous materials (reading), conduct talks over telephone (listening and speaking) or via e-mailing (writing).

In the course of BE learning such integration of speaking, listening, reading and writing as well as in real life models of professional activities provides transitions from one kind of communicative activity to others and is based on constructivist approach. The authenticity of materials and learning activities are prerequisite of successful teaching and learning otherwise students will miss the opportunity to learn from authentic target language samples. The principle of developing students' informative competence in English ensures the development of skills of future professionals to find and use required information through accessible channels in English using informational technologies.

The experience of BE teaching has convinced the author of the article that students of English-non major (mainly specialists-to-be in business administration and economy) at Tavria State Agrotechnological University need to be taught via normative documents⁸ adopted in the world practice. The reason for that, on the one hand, is to involve them in pragmatic learning activity relating to the sphere of their specialism and, on the other - to activate their motivational potential in the course of realizing by them meaningful activities in learning by doing. This means that the above mentioned learning experience assist learners to work out their optimal learning strategies and bring them up from their autonomous - creative

⁸ Karayeva T. Business English Teaching Via Normative Documents Adopted in Business Practice /T.Karayeva. – Business Issues (IATEFL SIG Newsletter), 2005. – Issue 1.

activities to self-actualization being realized in their projects. It may serve as important means in training learners for operating in the international markets.

But successful realization of the above mentioned learners' self-guided tasks is hardly possible without implementing the stage having been called for convenience Pre-Project Informational Training. It is in-class training via normative documents being both integral part of training learners for operating in international markets and the stage preceding to imaginative continuous simulation and business project itself. Among these normative documents to be used in BE teaching practice the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) and Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) have to be mentioned.

The purpose of this stage for learners is to get general notion and brief information on the existing Coding system in Ukraine, to learn the widely used abbreviations adopted in ISIC, to understand how the Ukrainian Coding System is correlated with international one. The students familiarize themselves with ISIC via Internet or read the handouts supplied by the instructor.

The purpose of another part of the stage, being proposed to learners, is to choose economic activities they are going to perform in their project and make mini-presentations at all the stages in the course of fulfilling self-guided tasks based on their personal interests, goals set in learning and choices made by them.

In general, according to everything said above, learners follow the certain stages through pre-project informational training, imaginative continuous simulation and, finally, business project itself.

It should be also noted that for managing and facilitating the above mentioned process of learning the author worked out special guidance for students to do their self-guided tasks on creating their own virtual enterprise. It means that in case the students choose this very self-guided task from the list of proposed learning activities they start to work out the projects of their own enterprise following certain sequence on the basis of learning materials having been searched and studied. The final "product" of the above mentioned students' learning is to

give presentation in the target language on the chosen problem. This guidance uses the elements of business project technology aimed to facilitate the students effective mastering of learning materials enabling them to make decisions in choosing the economic activity as well as products and services using the international classifiers and making up documents and texts themselves (on the basis of authentic materials), searching information in the Internet to form and develop their informative competence by means of elaborating authentic sources.

Everything said may be summarized by stating that the implementation of the suggested approach demonstrates a number of its advantages when teaching Business English:

- the great motivational potential of the students is being revealed as they are quite enthusiastic about doing creative tasks;
- the learning process to a great extent is being regulated and controlled by students themselves who are gaining their learner autonomy;
- students' informative competence is being developed in the course of their Internet-searching for appropriate information;
- the integrated skills of students are being developed when they try to solve pragmatic learning tasks.

All these advantages make the above approach a good aid in teaching Business English for students not majoring English on their way to become independent users of target language.

It is expedient to focus further research on working out the learning technologies for BE teaching/learning founded on the above mentioned principles for the students non-majoring English enabling to provide the successful outcomes of the entire learning process so far as learning activity arrangement promotes students' learning autonomy required for providing adequate communication by means of the language being studied as well as arranging conditions for forming the independent language users.

In conclusion it should also be noted that evident results of changes being introduced in the learning process need not only motivated students but motivated

teaching staff as well, otherwise it becomes practically impossible to activate learners' motivational potential.